



CONSERVATION ONTARIO POSITION ON GREAT LAKES SUSTAINABILITY

December 2006

VISION: *The Great Lakes Basin is a global treasure and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence region is one where people, the environment and the economy are healthy and thrive for generations to come.*

MISSION: *Conservation Ontario will work with all orders of government and basin residents as stewards to protect and improve the unique, shared Great Lakes and St. Lawrence ecosystem for present and future generations.*

GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR THE GREAT LAKES:

Apply an integrated watershed management approach to planning and implementation in order to protect and improve the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Ecosystem.

PRINCIPLES FOR HEALTHY GREAT LAKES

Behaviors and actions implemented through an integrated watershed management approach should ensure a sustainable and resilient Great Lakes and St. Lawrence ecosystem that encompasses environmental, social, and economic health.

Environmental

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence ecosystem must provide ecological functions and natural heritage systems, to support a diverse, healthy, balanced, self-sustaining biological community. The ecological balance of the resource has been damaged by a wide range of invasive species, unsustainable land use, ongoing and emerging contamination, and other threats, and Conservation Ontario must focus policies and programs to help reduce and ultimately eliminate these threats.

Working with municipal, provincial, federal agencies and partners for the sustainability of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence ecosystem, Conservation Ontario will:

- contribute to management of water and other physical elements to ensure the natural hydrologic cycle is able to sustain a balanced variety of uses
- advance programs so that sustainable natural processes, pathways and landscapes are maintained and improved so that water quality and quantity support natural biodiversity and ecosystem functions.
- engage Great Lakes stakeholders in policies and programs such that the built environment and urban fabric are compatible with and enhances the natural environment.

Social

An overarching social principle necessary for Great Lakes protection is that the citizens understand and take responsibility for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River ecosystem to provide present and future generations opportunities for enhanced quality of life. Conservation Ontario must focus policies and programs to advance stewardship and human health.

Working with municipal, provincial, federal agencies and partners for the sustainability of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence ecosystem, Conservation Ontario will:

- develop and implement watershed plans that foster good health by addressing threats to the quality and quantity of source water, noting that the Great Lakes is a source of drinking water to 8 million people in Ontario.
- work with stakeholders to educate citizens about the links between the environment and human health, and promote respect for and stewardship of the ecosystem in which they live.

Economic

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region should have a healthy economy and business climate that delivers quality goods and services, making use of natural resources in a manner that protects those natural assets for future generations. Conservation Ontario must focus policies and programs to encourage application of full-cost accounting to emphasize the value of natural capital and therefore encourage sustainable use.

Working with municipal, provincial, federal agencies and partners for the sustainability of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence ecosystem, Conservation Ontario will:

- advance innovative technologies and programs to support the development of new and existing public and private sector businesses that can operate in harmony with the vision for the Basin and add wealth to the region.
- work with all orders of government and other stakeholders to advance sustainable infrastructure and necessary improvements to infrastructure.
- support initiatives that increase the Region's attractiveness to new and existing industry and business for capital investment.

**As modified from the Vision of The Great Lakes Futures Roundtable (Nor 30, 2005)*

Conservation Ontario and Conservation Authorities

Conservation Ontario is made up of 36 Conservation Authorities, community-based resource management agencies working on a watershed basis. Conservation Authorities restore and protect aquatic and natural habits, protect natural areas open space as well as provide recreational and educational opportunities to local residents.

More than 10 million people, approximately 90 per cent of Ontario's population live in the watersheds managed by Conservation Authorities